



## California Public Utilities Commission

# ULTS Administrative Committee Meeting

## Meeting Minutes

Please join the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for the Universal LifeLine Telephone Service Administrative Committee Meeting:

**When:** Tuesday, December 7, 2021 (2:00 pm – 5:00 pm)

**Where:** WebEx meeting: [Join meeting](#)

<https://cpuc.webex.com/cpuc/j.php?MTID=mdb53e1f75a226801cbe5bc4bec9fca4d>

**Call-In Number:** +1-415-655-0002 **United States Toll:** Meeting number (access code): 2486 690 6549

## Agenda

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 2:00 – 2:05 p.m. | <b>Introduction: James Ahlstedt, Chair</b>  |
| 2:05 – 2:15 p.m. | <b>Welcome: Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma</b>  |
| 2:15 – 2:20 p.m. | <b>Approval of Minutes: Committee reviews and approves the last meeting minutes prepared by the Communications Division (CD)</b>  |
| 2:20 – 2:25 p.m. | <b>Public Comments</b>  |
| 2:25 – 3:10 p.m. | <b>Communications Division Liaison Reports:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Status of Proceedings:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Pilot Updates: <b>Robert Sansone</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ CA LL Foster Youth Integration Workshop Feedback</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>• Other:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Renewal Working Group Update: <b>Mary Rottman</b></li><li>○ Renewal Suspension Update: <b>Clover Selden</b></li></ul></li><li>• Claim Status: <b>Hector Corral</b></li></ul> <b>USAC Update: David Avila</b> |
| 3:10 – 3:25 p.m. | <b>Fiscal Report: Lalaine Semana</b>  |
| 3:25 – 3:35 p.m. | <b>CAB Report: Rosa Sauer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consumer Contact Statistics</li></ul>   |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 3:35 – 4:20 p.m. | <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Party Contract Reports: Sarah Detweiler</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Year- end review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Renewal Resumption</li> <li>▪ New Initiatives and Upgrades</li> <li>▪ Participant Statistics</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>                            |
| 4:20 – 4:40 p.m. | <b>2022 Annual Report Planning: James Ahlstedt</b>   |
| 4:40 – 4:50 p.m. | <b>Legal Report: Sindy Yun</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation Update</li> </ul>  |
| 4:50 – 4:55 p.m. | <b>Review of Administrative Committee Vacancy Status</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 open positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CLEC – 1 Alternate</li> <li>○ Small ILEC – 1 Alternate</li> <li>○ Consumer – 2 Alternates</li> <li>○ CBO – 2 Primary, 3 Alternates</li> <li>○ CPUC Public Advocates Office – 1 Alternate</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| 4:55 p.m.        | <b>Future Meeting Date</b>   |
| 5:00 p.m.        | <b>Adjournment</b>   |

## Member Roster

|    |  |                      |                                 |   |
|----|--|----------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 1  | <b>Large ILEC</b>                            | Primary<br>Alternate | Michael Foreman<br>Charlie Born | AT&T California<br>Frontier Communications                          |
| 2  | <b>Small ILEC</b>                            | Primary<br>Alternate | Linda Lassen<br>-----           | Sierra Tel  |
| 3  | <b>CLEC</b>                                  | Primary<br>Alternate | Marcie Evans<br>-----           | Cox Communications  |
| 4  | <b>Wireless</b>                              | Primary<br>Alternate | David Avila<br>Alex Gudkov      | TracFone Wireless, Inc.<br>TruConnect                               |
| 5  | <b>Deaf/Hearing Impaired or Disabled Rep</b> | Primary<br>Alternate | Kate Woodford<br>Brian Winic    | Center for Accessible Technology<br>CA Department of Rehabilitation |
| 6  | <b>Consumer</b>                              | Primary<br>Alternate | Ken McEldowney<br>-----         | Consumer Action   |
| 7  | <b>Consumer</b>                              | Primary<br>Alternate | Vinhcent Le<br>-----            | Greenlining   |
| 8  | <b>CBO</b>                                   | Primary<br>Alternate | Cesar Motts<br>-----            | Southeast Community Development Corp.                               |
| 9  | <b>CBO</b>                                   | Primary<br>Alternate | -----<br>-----                  |   |
| 10 | <b>CBO</b>                                   | Primary<br>Alternate | -----<br>-----                  |   |
| 11 | <b>CPUC's Public Advocates Office</b>        | Primary<br>Alternate | James Ahlstedt<br>-----         | Public Advocates Office   |

## Meeting Minutes - ULTS-AC Meeting - December 7, 2021, 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

### Attendees: 9 primary members and 3 alternates present

- **Primary Members:** David Avila – TracFone Wireless, Kate Woodford – Center for Accessible Technology, Linda Lassen – Sierra Telephone, Marcie Evens – Cox Communications, Cesar Motts – Southeast Community Development Corp, Vinhcent Le - Greenlining Institute, Michael Foreman – AT&T, James Ahlstedt – Public Advocates Office
- **Alternates:** Alex Godkov – TruConnect, Brian Winic – CA Dept of Rehabilitation, Charlie Born – Frontier Communication

### Other Attendees:

- **CPUC Staff:** Andrew Aliabado, Antoinette Siguenza, Christina Tan, Ed Charkowicz., Hector Corral, Ian Culver, Joseph Haga, Joshua Li, Kellie Jones, Lelaine Semana, Leuwam Tesfai, Mary Rottman, Omar Teutle, Rebekah Singleton, Robert Sansone, Rosa Sauer, Sandy Lamb, Sharmila Selvalakshmirajeswara, Sindy Yun, Sunshine Palma, Tina Lee, Clover Sellden, Chari Worster, Erin Miller
- **Other:** Sarah Detweiler – Maximus

### Introductory Remarks – James Ahlstedt

- Commissioner Shiroma unable to attend the meeting
- Commissioner Staff attending: Leuwam Tesfai and Christina Tan

### Approval of Sept 2022 Minutes

- David Avila - Motion to Approve
- Motion approved by the members

### Public Comments:

- No comments

### Communication Division Liaison Reports

- **Status of Proceedings – Robert Sansone**
  - Sindy Yun reported Robert not available and provided a short update on the Renewal Working Group Report. No ruling yet and therefore Commission staff is unable to provide much information.
  - Clover Sellden – Reported the renewal extension is in place until the end of the year and has no information re: an additional extension.
- **Questions:**
  - Alex Godkov – requested an update on the status of the Renewal Working Group Report
  - Clover S. responded that it is with the ALJ, and we cannot share information re: status or comment on the timing.
- **Hector – Claims Status**
  - Sept/Oct 2021 claims currently being reviewed and requested submission of any corrections of LifeLine claims to be sent to cpuc.ca.gov
- **David Avila – See PPT presentation for detail**
  - **Fed LifeLine Updates;**
    - FCC waived for 1 yr scheduled MSS changes – Mobile data = 4.5 GB/month and voice = \$5.25/mo.
    - Other updates listed in presentation materials

- Important to continue to focus on LifeLine program even though EBB and ACP programs are a big help to close the digital divide, it forces consumers to make decisions about their needs
- Key issues for 2022
  - Reform - \$9.25 subsidy should be increased
  - Participation rates (need to improve)
- Should focus on both fed and CA LifeLine programs even though broadband offerings are very helpful
- **USAC Update**
  - **National Verifier**
    - Important to support LifeLine program by increasing usage of automated connection to program data bases. However not every state has access to key data bases
    - Has improved participation & enrollment experience
    - Reverification process is complex and time consuming & must be monitored closely to avoid de-enrollment
  - **ACP Program**
    - Extends many aspects of EBB program with \$14.2B budget
    - New rules not expected until January 14, 2022
    - Concern about customer confusion about the end of the EBB program and start of ACP program
- **Questions:**

Q. James A. \$9.25 subsidy not sufficient for LifeLine service. What is the likelihood of the FCC increasing the subsidy levels?

A. David A. FCC has had other priorities and has been without a chairperson for most of the year. Any change or improvement in subsidy levels will come from the work of consumer groups pushing for a change and not from the FCC. The industry needs to work together to provide consumers with appropriate subsidy levels.

Q. James A. ACP eligibility income eligibility levels were increased from 132% to 200% of the poverty level and is higher than CA eligibility requirements. It also is inclusive of SNAP and WIC. Will these changes be adopted by the LifeLine program or is it strictly for ACP?

A. David A. This is new and addresses a known issue that many people are struggling to make ends meet and fall into this category. It is, however, a challenge to implement for regular LifeLine

Q. Cesar M. Clarify if discount can be used for telephone or broadband or both?

Comment: Sindy Yun: Fed LifeLine customers are automatically ACP eligible. The total subsidy is almost \$40 dollars: \$9.25 Fed LifeLine and \$30 ACP = \$39.25. ACP program provides \$30 extra dollars for LifeLine customers.

A. David A. Pointed out that consumers must make a choice to use the subsidy for Broadband or voice

Comment: Sindy Y. Clarified that customers have many different options that can be combined in different ways. The point is to give consumers more money so they can get connected to broadband.

Comment: David A. and Cesar M. clarifying how to use the LifeLine benefits (both fed and state) for voice and ACP for Broadband. CA consumers are eligible for LifeLine for voice and ACP for Broadband

Sindy Y. Encouraged members to reach out to the CPUC for clarification

Q. Linda Lassen. With EBB, consumers are required to apply for the discount. Is that the same as ACP? Those details have not been worked out yet. With the Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> deadline shouldn't there be consumer notice?

A. David A. Yes, things are moving so quickly, service providers have not created the process yet. Consumers really need to be informed of the guidelines and consequences of ACP and reduction of EBB offering.

Comment: Marcie Evens. Appreciated the presentation. It answered her questions. Acknowledged the CPUC has a lot of work to do to implement the programs and accommodate service provider and consumer questions and process issues.

### **Fiscal Report – Lalaine Semana**

- See presentation for LifeLine Telephone Service Trust Fund 0471 Balance, appropriation and expenditures for the period ending September 30, 2021.
- \$438.4 million available appropriation balance and \$364.8 million available cash balance

### **CAB Report: Rosa Sauer**

- Consumer contact statistics (see presentation materials)
- VOIP consumer transition issues. Customer often losing LifeLine benefit. If the carrier doesn't manage the problem, consumer can refer it to the FCC, however this could take 2-3 weeks to receive a new phone when they change service providers. Sandy will follow up on this issue.

Q. David A. Are consumers calling about EBB and are they confused?

A. Yes, there is a lot of confusion.

Q. Is CAB tracking EBB Calls?

A. Yes, but consumers are still reaching out about EBB as well as LifeLine. Consumers don't understand if they have EBB, why don't they have LifeLine. (many are assuming EBB and LifeLine are one program).

Q. David A. Does CAB have a visibility to EBB carriers?

A. Yes, but only for LifeLine and not EBB (federal).

Q. Alex G. Requested 15 month trend of contacts received and closed by CAB.

A. Try to close written requests within 30 – 45 days.

### **Maximus - Third Party Contract Reports – Sarah Detweiler (see PPT presentation materials)**

- Pandemic consumer protection measures
- Enhanced partnership with external entities
- Renewal and Subscriber Process Enhancements
  - SPIA (Service Provider Intake Information Application)
- Changes to the California LifeLine public Website
  - “Mobile First” approach
- Automated Renewals – external 3<sup>rd</sup> party data matching and digital ID verification
  - CalFresh Confirm – system connections through relationship with Department of Social Services
- Call Center Support
  - TPA call center received and continues to receive high volume of calls re: EBB
- Upcoming Initiatives
  - API (SPIA) enhancement to the application and renewal process done by SPIA in “real-time intake process”
  - Plan to add more data sources to the CalFresh confirm process

- Additional Public website updates:
  - Stand-alone economic household process

Q. David A. Does Maximus know what EBB program the consumer is enrolled in?

A. No, we do not have that information.

- Statistics Review (See presentation materials)
  - 1,007,704 active subscribers
  - 231,840 wireline
  - 1,239,544 wireless
  - 2.57 days – wireless (application received and approved)
  - 2.35 days for wireline (application received and approved)

Q. David A. Has Maximus noticed if LifeLine participation has grown since EBB was launched?

A. Maximus hasn't studied that question yet. At the next ULTS-AC meeting Maximus will have evaluated if EBB program. In general, it is helping participation rates.

Sindy Y. Does the 1 million enrolled customers include those enrolled in EBB

A. Don't believe the numbers are impacted by EBB. Until May 2021, there was an increase in wireless population. After that \$1.8 million affected by resumption of the non-usage disconnects. Service providers are now better at submitting non-usage numbers than in the past. Going forward the TPA is going to look deeper into active subscriber count and if they are seeing "churn" now that COVID has settled down and street teams are back at work. They have also seen an uptick in DAP applications.

Other Statistics:

- Change in enrollment eligibility numbers SNAP enrollment is larger (due to the use of CalFresh confirm) or even with MediCal and non-SNAP and is becoming a larger percentage of applications. SNAP increase is driven using CalFresh confirm because a match can be confirmed via the CalFresh database regardless of what the consumer puts on the application for program eligibility.

Q. Alex G. Will ID verification process be the same when using CalFresh confirm?

A. Yes, it will continue to be done as in the past.

Q. David Avila. Has the TPA been able to calculate the benefit of the process in terms of increasing participants?

A. Don't have a specific number yet but given there is a 40% match rate for the subscriber group going through the process and those individuals will not have to go through the review process, it is expected to have a favorable impact on participation rates.

- Service Provider Calls
  - English and Spanish – top 2 languages
  - Majority of calls were about renewals
  - Summer months to December received a lot of EBB calls – consumers are confused and accounted for 5% of total November 2021 volume
  - TPA may create a special EBB line to handle escalated calls

### **ULTS-AC Annual Report Discussion**

- Feedback
  - Content – new ideas?
  - What has been done in the past?

- Recommendations
- Does the Committee want to recommend specific actions?
- What format is the preferable?
- Other thoughts?
- What lessons have been learned from other Annual Reports?
  - David Avila – liked the collaboration within the Committee and Commissioner’s office
  - List of recommendations are important
  - Useful document for planning
  - Want to spend more time on recommendations and suggestions
  - Start early to enable the Committee to provide more input
- Marcie Evans
  - Prefers the timeline, it gives perspective and timeframe and what each document and ruling did, provides more perspective and detail etc.
  - Can the ULTS-AC issue a survey as a committee to get more ideas?
- Sindy Yun – Mary can send out a survey that is prepared by the Committee
- Michael Foreman:
  - Survey question suggestion
    - Ask for input from the working group members re: what they would like the Committee to work on. Maybe send a “second” survey for the working group
    - Not a CPUC sponsored survey
    - Make the objective clear
- Marcie Evens:
  - Suggested they should review the CSUS Assessment report and Maximus information
- James Ahlstedt:
  - 2 members to draft bullets points/high level topics for next year to bring up with the Commission
  - Can also recommend changes to the Commission
  - Timing would take place after or during the March 2022 meeting
- Sindy Yun:
  - Sindy to follow up on the subcommittee process, number of people that can participate and if it can be expanded beyond 2 people
- Annual Report Volunteers for 2 subcommittees
  - Committee must vote on volunteers
  - Shift the focus to recommendations and actions
  - Issues presented in the Assessment Report
- Mike Foreman and David Avila volunteered to work on prioritization of issues with the Assessment report recommendations.
- Subcommittee – member survey (survey monkey)
  - Linda Lassen and James Ahlstedt
- Member Vote on subcommittee
  - Approved by the Committee

**Legal Report – Sindy Yun**

- AB74 passed on Sept. 20, 2021
  - PUC code 878.6 Improve recertification process
- SB 547
  - iFoster pilot – still pending and not signed by Governor
  - Make foster youth eligible (part of) the LifeLine program

## **Review of Member Vacancies**

- David A. and James A. attending meetings with the LIOB, DAG and other groups to see where there are collaboration possibilities and further improve services for low-income people.
- Also provides an opportunity to recruit new ULTS-AC members, specifically CBO positions
  - Vinhcent Le is talking with the City of Berkeley, Greenlining Institute and building capacity for LifeLine outreach
- Barriers for Committee Members
  - Time commitment
  - Not much compensation
  - Worried that it requires more experience with LifeLine and the telecommunication industry

**Meeting concluded: 4:49 pm**